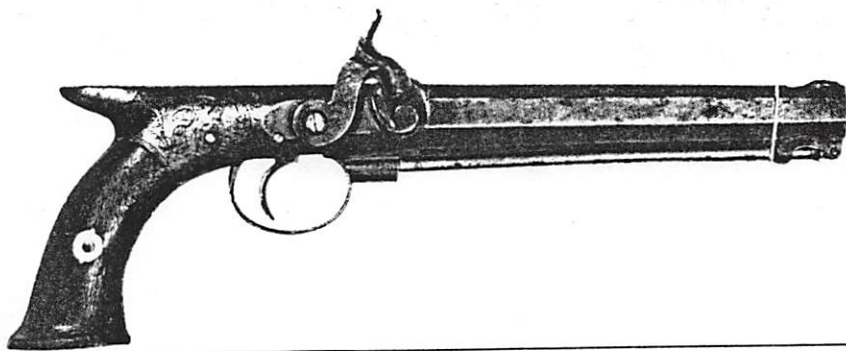




The Walker War: Defense and Conciliation as Strategy

BY HOWARD A. CHRISTY



Early Utah weapons. USHS collections.

THE 1853 WALKER WAR IN UTAH was not much of a war by most standards. Yet a close examination of that episode reveals much more than a string of uncoordinated and ineffectual raids by the Utes. Behind descriptions of the few bloody contacts that occurred lies the fascinating story of a war in fact and the extent to which the Utah territorial government was successful in carrying out an unusual experiment in defense and conciliation as strategy in that war.

The Mormons were no strangers to either defense or conciliation. They had consistently emphasized community security and military preparedness since launching their great westward emigration in 1846. Mormon policy also included conciliation, although the ideal often broke

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down in practice once the settlers began to meet opposition to their accelerated expansion into the Indian domain, particularly the domain of the Utes.¹ Perhaps convinced that previous offensive responses to the Ute threat had been largely unsuccessful, the territorial leadership put into effect a full-scale effort to thwart the 1853 Ute revolt by passive means.

Regardless of whatever accommodations either the Mormons or the Utes had made to each other, the Utes found themselves steadily losing in their struggle to survive. Before the Mormons came in 1847, the Wasatch oasis had afforded the Utes sufficient food, and they had augmented their livelihood by trading to Mexicans (along the Spanish Trail) horses acquired during massive raids in California and Indian slaves captured from nearby Paiutes and Gosiutes. Increasingly forced from their lands along the Wasatch, their income from the horse trade lost since the California mountain passes were closed to them, the Utes became more and more dependent on the traffic in Indian slaves. Disgusted with such traffic and the cruel manner in which it was carried out, territorial officials in 1852 moved formally to stamp out the Indian slave trade by passing legislation specifically designed to stymie the Mexican trade along the Spanish Trail.² There is little evidence indicating the effect of such legislation, but it is apparent that some amount of covert slave trading continued into 1853. Renewed efforts to stifle the slave trade precipitated the Walker War.

I

On April 20, 1853, Gov. Brigham Young left Great Salt Lake City on a tour of all the southern settlements. In Provo a heavily armed mountain man approached him and asked for a private interview. Young refused the interview, and later that day word was received that the mountain man had boasted to others that he had "400 Mexicans awaiting my orders, and can have as many more if I wish, besides, the Indians here are all at my command." Apparently persuaded that a major slave-trading expedition was under way and determined to carry out previous edicts against such enterprise, Young, still at Provo, issued a proclamation calling for: a militia force to reconnoiter the southern settlements,

¹ The first settlement outside the environs of greater Salt Lake Valley was Provo, in Utah Valley—the center of a primary Western Ute living area. Provo was settled in 1849.

² See "Journal History of the Church," (hereafter cited as JH) March 3, 7, 1852, Archives Division, Historical Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah. For information on prior moves to check the slave trade, see JH, May 12, November 3, 5, December passim, 1851; and February 10, 1852. For more information on the Pedro Leon incident, see B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1930; reprint ed., Provo, Ut.: Brigham Young University Press, 1965), 4:36–38.



Chief Walker and Arrapine. Route from Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley.

the arrest of "every strolling Mexican party and those associated with them, and other suspicious persons or parties," all militia to be in readiness, and the entire population to be on guard. In compliance with the proclamation, Capt. William Wall, with forty-four men, left Provo on April 24 on an expedition which sent a shock through all the villages south of Provo, white and Indian alike.³

Only just started, Wall arrested three Mexican traders at Payson on April 24.⁴ The next day Wall met Ute Chief Bateez, who told him he had heard the militia was being sent out to kill him—and chiefs Peteetneet and Walker as well.⁵ Obviously the Ute Indians were alarmed. Young, who had moved on to Nephi, then ordered Wall to ascertain the whereabouts of Walker and to take him prisoner if he was not "disposed to live peacefully with his band of Indians while in this Territory."⁶ Apparently reports had been received that, in addition to continuing in the slave trade, Walker was threatening the safety of white inhabitants. At Great Salt Lake City, militia commander Daniel H. Wells issued what was essentially a mobilization order to the entire territorial militia as a follow-up to Young's proclamation, and numerous subsequent orders were issued by the various district commanders.⁷

On April 27 Wall, then at Fillmore, learned that Walker had left Parowan and was heading for Manti; and settlers at Manti reported to Young that Arrapine, Walker's brother and a leading war chief, had left Manti the day before "very mad and all the Indians left the neighborhood in a great hurry. . . ." It was also reported that at "Allred's Settlement [Spring City] the Indians kept the citizens in alarm all night, several of the men having their guns in their hands all night."⁸

On April 29 an Indian messenger from Walker reported that Walker, Arrapine, and others wanted to be at peace. Governor Young responded by sending Walker "a couple of shirts some tobacco and told them to behave themselves."⁹ Still, more Utes headed for the mountains and a report was received that "one hundred and fifty Yampa Utes [a band east of

³ JH, April 20, 23, 1853; Daniel H. Wells to Peter W. Conover, April 23, 1853, Utah Territorial Militia Correspondence, 1849-1863, ST-27, microfilm reels 1 and 3, document no. 231, Utah State Archives (Annex), Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as SA, followed by the particular document number); SA-23a; General Order no. 1, SA-232; and Brigham Young conference address, May 8, 1853, as cited in JH, May 8, 1853.

⁴ Wall to Daniel H. Wells, May 11, 1853, SA-243.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Young to Wall, April 25, 1853, SA-236.

⁷ General Order no. 2, SA-237.

⁸ Wall to Wells, May 11, 1853, SA-243; and JH, April 27, 1853.

⁹ Ibid., April 29, 1853.

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the Wasatch] had gone over to Walker's camp."¹⁰ Young, sensing the danger of the situation and the need to be in full control if major fighting broke out, cancelled the remainder of his tour and headed north. Captain Wall continued his mission and reached the southernmost settlements on May 2, the day Young arrived back at Great Salt Lake City.¹¹

Five days later Young responded to a report from Isaac Morley at Manti that Walker and Arrapine had come into Manti and had again requested that there be peace. Young invited normal trade to resume, but he warned that if the Utes continued in the slave trade they would be forcefully opposed to the extent that they would

continue to decrease until they become extinct, until there is no more of them, you can tell Walker this, and also tell him to come and see me and trade, and be my brother; If I talk to him plain it is to do him good.¹²

The next day Young explained the situation to the people in a powerfully worded address in which he admonished all to keep up their guard. He discounted Walker's latest peace entreaty by stating that

it is truly characteristic of the cunning Indian, when he finds he cannot get advantage over his enemy to curl down at peace and say "I love you." It is enough for me that Walker dare not attempt to hurt any of our settlements. I care not whether they love me or not; I am resolved however, not to trust his love . . . and I shall live a long while before I can believe that an Indian is my friend, when it would be to his advantage to be my enemy.

Young went on to predict that Walker would "be peaceable, and the rest of the Indians also; I have no doubt of it. Why? *Because they dare not be any other way.* If they dare be otherwise I know not how quick they would be at war with us; but they will be kind and peaceable because they are afraid to die, and that is enough for me."¹³

Though Young's address was for the express purpose of stimulating defense preparedness, his choice of words indicates that he may have miscalculated how far the Utes would go in an effort to keep the slave trade alive. His dispatching of Captain Wall on a torrid trip through the southern settlements as a show of force and his veiled threats conveyed to Walker through Isaac Morley were intended to check Walker from either hostility or continued slave trading. Unfortunately they may have

¹⁰ Ibid., April 29, May 2, 1853.

¹¹ Ibid., and Wall to Wells, May 11, 1853, SA-243.

¹² Young to Morley, May 7, 1853, Brigham Young Collection (hereafter cited as BYC), LDS Archives, microfilm reel 32, box 13, folder 9.

¹³ Young conference address, JH, May 8, 1853.

had the opposite effect. Many Indians received a bad scare, but those for whom the efforts were principally intended were enraged.¹¹

By May 12, with the report that Ute Chief Peteetneet had taken his band out of Utah Valley "to wait and see how the battle went," the lines were drawn.¹² The settlers held all their positions, increasingly on guard, and most of the Utes fled up the canyons of the central Wasatch. A tense quiet prevailed through June.

On July 2 Walker once again demonstrated a desire for peace. He and Peteetneet responded to Young's previous invitation and came to see him in Great Salt Lake City. The record does not indicate what was discussed or decided, but apparently the meeting did not go well. No important commitments were made, Young probably sticking to a hard line in hopes that the Utes would not attack for fear of an overwhelming response, and Walker probably insisting on hands off the slave trade.¹³

The spark was struck on July 17, 1853, in Utah Valley. During a bitter squabble over the terms of a minor trade of flour for fish, a fight broke out which resulted in the death of one Indian and the serious injury to at least one other at the hands of James Ivie. The matter was reported immediately to authorities in nearby Springville and frantic efforts were made by the Mormon bishop there to make amends—to no avail. Descriptions of the incident soon reached Walker's camp, no doubt in inflammatory terms, and the enraged Utes held a council of war.¹⁴

Walker later explained that he was angered by the Ivie incident, as the slain person was related to him, but that he counseled there be no more than the customary limited revenge for the life taken.¹⁵ Whether or not mere revenge was intended, messengers were sent out to other Ute bands warning them that war would soon ensue.¹⁶

According to the account of Orson F. Whitney, a party of Utes from Walker's camp paid an ostensibly friendly visit to the Payson settlement

¹¹ Wall to Wells, SA-243, May 11, 1853.

¹² Dimick B. Huntington to Wells, JH, May 12, 1853.

¹³ JH, July 2, 1853.

¹⁴ For accounts of the Ivie incident see Peter Gottfredson, *Indian Depredations in Utah* (Salt Lake City: Skelton Publishing Co., 1919), pp. 45-56. Gottfredson's work covers the entire Walker War, primarily highlighting the incidents of hostile contact. Some of the accounts quote primary sources, some do not. Still, it offers the most detailed account of the war in print up to the date of this article. Also see Orson F. Whitney, *History of Utah*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons, Publishers, 1892), 1:514-20.

¹⁵ See Nelson Higgins to James Ferguson, March 16, 1854, SA-1386.

¹⁶ George W. Bradley to Wells, July 19, 1853, SA-256; and George A. Smith to Young, July 20, 1853, SA-281.

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where they were warmly received. Upon leaving the fort on the evening of July 18, one of the Indians without warning or provocation shot and killed Alexander Keel as he stood guard. The assailants then rode on to Walker's camp and the entire band broke and fled up Peteetneet Canyon, firing on outlying settlers and seizing twenty-five head of cattle as they went.²⁰

Although the killing of Keel was a shock, trouble had been expected for weeks and the militia was prepared to respond. The machinery of emergency mobilization went into gear immediately and communications were quickly sent in every direction. Throughout the night of July 18 and all the next day, militiamen throughout the territory answered to muster, and several units headed for Payson and on to the less-populated villages south of Utah Valley.

In 1853 the Utah Territorial Militia numbered about two thousand men organized into brigades, regiments, battalions, and companies, both infantry and cavalry, with minimal artillery support. The task organization looked impressive on paper, though in reality units at the local level were small and loosely organized. However, the officers, particularly those south of Salt Lake County, were experienced and capable. Local control was complete. In addition to containing militia organizations in every settlement, the territory was organized into military districts essentially coterminous with the several counties. The senior militia unit commanders doubled as military district commanders which gave them emergency authority over the civilian population in their districts.²¹ Behind this organization stood the full power of the Mormon church. Many of the highest ranking militia and civil leaders were also ranking church officials.

Col. Peter W. Conover, commander of the Utah Military District, received word at Provo at about 11:00 P.M., July 18, of the killing of Alexander Keel, and immediately began forming up a force to move toward Payson. He also sent messengers to militia headquarters in Great Salt Lake City and to all outlying settlements both in and out of Utah County. Within an hour he was in Payson with fifty mounted troops, where he was soon joined by Maj. Stephen Markham with an even larger

²⁰ Whitney, *History of Utah*, 1:514; and Conover and Stephen Markham to Wells, July 19, 1853, SA-257.

²¹ No definitive work on Utah Territorial Militia organization exists. See JH, May 19, 1849, December 13, 1852, October 15, December 8, 1853, February 28, 1854; SA-229, SA-239A, SA-320, SA-346, SA-357, SA-407, SA-1334, SA-1346, SA-1352; Paul Bailey, *Armies of God* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1968); Brigham Young Manuscript History, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as HBY), October 1853; and Roberts, *Comprehensive History* 3:456-57.



Daniel H. Wells.
USHS collections.



Chief Kanosh.
USHS collections.

force recruited in Springville and Palmyra (near present-day Spanish Fork). The two officers left at dawn with 150 men and headed for Manti, sixty miles distant, guessing that Walker might be headed that way for an attack. The force arrived at Nephi at two in the morning, July 20, left five hours later, and arrived at Manti by dark, less a small detachment dropped off to aid the hamlet at Pleasant Creek (Mount Pleasant), which lay along the line of possible Ute approach. They made no contact with Indians.²²

Concern intensified as dispatches circulated telling of seemingly coordinated probes by Indians at Springville, Spanish Fork, and at Pleasant Creek. Conover later reported that his scouts had found signs indicating that a large number of Indians had in fact approached Manti but that the militia had probably arrived just in time to discourage an attack. Reports were sent north estimating that Walker had amassed from two to three hundred warriors and that heavy militia reinforcements from other districts were urgently needed.²³

²² Conover and Markham to Wells, July 19, 1853, SA-257; and Conover to Wells, August 21, 1853, SA-1357.

²³ Conover and Markham to Wells, July 19, 1853, SA-257; Conover to Wells, August 21, 1853, SA-1357; E. M. Greene to David Evans, July 20, 1853, SA-278; G. G. Potter to Higgins, July 20, 1853, SA-280; and Conover to Wells, July 23, 1853, SA-284.

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General Wells, in Great Salt Lake City, issued a flurry of orders to commands throughout the territory. Special Order no. 1 tasked a force of one hundred men under Lt. Col. William H. Kimball to proceed south immediately to link up with Conover. Special Order no. 2 instructed Markham, who unbeknownst to Wells had already left for Manti with Conover, to raise a force of sixty men to "march in pursuit of the Indians." Conover was also ordered to pursue the Indians and to "capture Walker the Chief of the Utahs." However, an all-important caveat was attached. Conover's orders continued: "He will be careful as far as the execution of these instructions will admit, to preserve the lives and health of his command, and in no case act upon the offensive, but where a sure and effective blow may be struck." To Markham, Wells was even more explicit:

He will in his encounters with the Indians avoid as much as possible the shedding of blood, but endeavor to obtain the desired object and prevent by mildness and judicious management a recurrence of the present hostilities.²⁴

These fragmentary orders were followed two days later by General Order no. 1 putting the entire southern sector on the defense and pointedly ordering Conover and Markham to "forthwith bring their expedition to a close . . ." The order closed with the admonition:

. . . we wish it distinctly understood that no retaliation be made and no offense offered but for all to act entirely on the defense until further orders. . . . It is desirable in order to completely carry out the policy indicated in the foregoing that no threats or intimidations be made or exercised toward the Indians no more than nothing unusual had occurred.

Governor Young signed the order.²⁵

A strategy of defense and conciliation was put into effect at the outset. Though the orders published by General Wells were somewhat contradictory, the language of General Order no. 1 was clear and decisive. Had that order been received in time, and had it been assiduously obeyed, the revolt could have been short-circuited then and there and virtually no bloodshed need have occurred beyond the death of Alexander Keel. Unfortunately the orders were to be carried out by men of little patience and understanding, and a real war, although one dominated by de-

²⁴ Wells to Jedediah M. Grant, July 19, 1853, SA-254; and Special Orders no. 1 and 2, SA-258, SA-259.

²⁵ General Order no. 1, July 21, 1853, SA-1335.

fensive strategy, dragged out over several months, punctuated by several more bloody engagements.

II

Colonel Conover was in all likelihood dismayed when both Special and General orders no. 1 finally caught up with him at Manti on July 23. Both Conover and Markham had offensive action in mind when they departed Payson without waiting for orders. Upon their arrival at Manti, offensive patrols were sent out, and two such patrols were dispatched just hours before the express arrived with the orders canceling the expedition. As fate would have it, one of those patrols attacked a Ute camp east of Pleasant Creek and six Indians were killed. With that, any chance for an early return to peace was probably lost. The Utes, whatever their designs might have been up to that moment, now had cause for retaliation.²⁶

In the meantime, in response to the Indian threat and instructions in General Order no. 1, settlers began to abandon hamlets and outlying farms considered too small or exposed to defend. The hamlets of Summit Creek (Santaquin) and Clover Creek were the first to be evacuated, in response to orders issued by Colonel Conover on July 19.²⁷ The settlements of Hamilton's Mill and Pleasant Creek were next, the people joining the families at nearby Allred's Settlement. Maj. Nelson Higgins, in command at Manti, advised withdrawal to Manti of the now-combined settlement but allowed them an option. They chose to stay but later regretted the decision.²⁸ The Utes, having suffered painful losses east of Pleasant Creek, fell back and considered their next move. A few Indians entered abandoned Summit Creek where they fired on a surprised express riding through, wounding two.²⁹ On July 25 Conover and Markham, their wings clipped, departed Manti for the return trip to Utah Valley, the fate of the war apparently no longer in their hands.

Meanwhile, on July 21, George A. Smith, an apostle in the elite Quorum of the Twelve of the Mormon church and prominent figure in southern settlement affairs, wrote to Governor Young requesting that

²⁶ Conover to Wells, August 21, 1853, SA-1357; and Conover to Wells, July 26, 1853, SA-1339.

²⁷ Conover to Wells, August 21, 1853, SA-1357.

²⁸ Higgins to James T. S. Allred and Gardner G. Potter, July 20, 1853, SA-277. Potter to Ferguson, July 21, 1853, SA-275; and Conover to Wells, July 26, 1853, SA-1339.

²⁹ Canfield to Smith, July 24, 1853, SA-286.

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another commander be assigned to the Provo Military District "as Colonel Conover is the other side of Mt. Nebo" and that "if it is thot [*sic*] advisable to follow Walker into the mountains a heavy additional force of men is necessary." He also reported that a great deficiency of arms and ammunition existed.³⁰ It was obvious that Smith was not satisfied with the manner in which Conover had handled his military responsibilities so far. Action on his request came four days later in the form of General Order no. 2, which formed all militia elements south of Salt Lake County into the Southern Militia Department and directed Smith (also a militia colonel) to take command. The order, as agonizingly to the point as its antecedent, further spelled out to what extent the defensive was to be carried out.

II. It is distinctly understood that all the people shall assemble into large and permanent forts and no man is at liberty to refuse to obey this order without being dealt with as an enemy.

III. All surplus stock that is not particularly needed for teams and milk must be driven to this city and placed in the charge of the Presiding Bishop of this city until further orders.³¹

Having thereby nailed down the defense, Young the same day dispatched to Chief Walker a classic letter of conciliation accompanied by a pouch of tobacco.³²

On July 26 Colonel Smith firmly asserted his new authority with several special orders and then departed on a whirlwind tour of all the southern settlements with General Order no. 2 in hand. During the next twenty-seven days Smith covered nine hundred miles, visited every settlement at least once, and forcefully put the general order into effect in all its particulars. He also issued thirty orders of his own along the way.³³ If Governor Young intended full enforcement of his defensive strategy he selected the right man to carry it out. Young's edicts, drastic in the tremendous effort they required, were strongly opposed by many settlers. The success with which Smith put those edicts into action can be credited to his remarkable force, mettle, and sense of duty. Governor Young excused no one in the territory from full compliance with his orders. Settlers as far away as Ogden and Cedar City had difficulty in seeing the need for such stringent measures. On several occasions letters were sent by

³⁰ Smith to Young, July 21, 1853, SA-1336.

³¹ General Order no. 2, July 25, 1853, SA-288.

³² Young to Walkara, July 25, 1853, SA-289. This "I send you some tobacco for you to smoke in the mountains when you get lonesome" letter has been quoted often by historians.

³³ HBY, August 19, 1853, and Smith to several militia commanders, SA-1338.

ecclesiastical and military leaders in response to complaints. An open letter from the First Presidency of the Mormon church was even provided Colonel Smith for use when confronted, as he often was. One colorful though stern letter was sent to settlers near Tooele from the First Presidency which stated: "If they do not give heed to the counsel of the First Presidency of the Church Captain Walker [Ute Chief Walker] will no doubt teach them their duty."³⁴

III

Upon striking south beyond Nephi (and out of Ute-dominated terrain), Colonel Smith reflected in a report to Governor Young on July 28 that, although all reports from further south indicated a peaceful posture on the part of the Indians there, he was "still of the opinion that our policy of fortifying and calling all small settlements into the larger forts is the thing that will preserve peace." Smith went on to report that Chief Kanosh, of the Pahvant Utes near Fillmore, "says he is ready to fight for the Mormons," indicating that Walker had fewer allies than expected and that Governor Young's policy was beginning to have an effect. Smith stated, "I have not much confidence in any Indian professions of faith yet we shall try to open a treaty with those southern bands of the Utes [San Pitch Utes] through the Pah Vants."³⁵

That same day, Smith, as if he had a premonition, sent off an express to Major Higgins at Manti instructing him to "remove all the families residing at the Allred Settlement forthwith into Manti with all their stock, grain and effects."³⁶ He was too late. The express met messengers speeding in the opposite direction with news that a large number of Utes had descended on Allred's Settlement and had driven off some two hundred head of cattle and horses, virtually all that were there. Though as many as thirty-five cows were eventually recovered, the loss, and the realization of the Utes' demonstrated ability to carry off a letter-perfect raid in broad daylight, was staggering.³⁷ If Governor Young, General

³⁴ First Presidency to Allen Weeks and Brethren at Cedar Valley, July 26, 1853, SA-1337; First Presidency to Smith, July 30, 1853, SA-314; Wells to William Wadsworth and Charles S. Peterson, August 9, 1853, SA-328; Wells to Evans, August 24, 1853, SA-1359; Kimball to Wells, August 1, 1853, SA-317; Henry Standage to Ferguson, October 30, 1853, SA-410; and Young to Standage, December 10, 1853, SA-424. The Weber military district commander had his hands full also. One of his admonitions was that "if men resist or refuse to obey orders like Jas. Davis put them in irons with ball and chain." Wells to David Moore, September 1, 1853, SA-375.

³⁵ Smith to Young, July 28, 1853, SA-299.

³⁶ Smith to Higgins, July 28, 1853, SA-303.

³⁷ Higgins to Ferguson, Conover, and Markham, July 29, 1853, SA-305; and Bradley to Wells, August 1, 1853, SA-1344.

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*Chief Antero.
Courtesy Smithsonian Office
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*George A. Smith.
C. R. Savage photograph,
USHS collections.*

Wells, or Colonel Smith needed further justification for their defensive policy, they now had it. Chief Walker later reported that the attack was in retaliation for the killings of July 23. It had been proposed to slaughter all the settlers at Allred's Settlement, but Walker claimed he gave his support for the raid only after he was promised that all lives would be spared.²⁸

A week later Smith's resolve was sorely tested when the settlers at Cedar City openly rebelled against carrying out the provisions of General Order no. 2. Several settlers refused to allow their cattle to be herded to Salt Lake Valley and threatened to shoot anyone who tried to move them. Only five individuals were arrested, but the entire town was in sympathy. Smith, quartered in Parowan, made several trips to Cedar City to admonish the settlers there to obey the governor's orders. They stiffly resisted. Finally, at a meeting called by him seven days after the mutiny broke out, Smith for the last time attempted to convince the people to carry out their orders. He was met by defiance and insult. At the same meeting the Cedar City militia commander, Maj. Mathew Caruthers, tendered his resignation which Smith accepted before he

²⁸ Higgins to Ferguson, March 16, 1854, SA-1386. Also see Smith's Special Order no. 19, SA-1338.

stalked off, leaving Lieutenant Colonel Kimball behind to assure compliance with General Order no. 2. 'The next day the surplus stock at Cedar City joined the combined herd on its way north.)'³⁹

Not all of Smith's energies were expended at Cedar City. He also supervised the withdrawal of all outlying settlements, farms, and mining camps to Parowan and Cedar City, the only two towns selected for fortification in that sector. The hamlets at Paragonah, New Harmony, Shirt's Settlement, and Johnson's Settlement were not only abandoned, they were dismantled, and every movable piece carted or dragged back to the forts. In contrast to Cedar City, however, at Paragonah and Parowan "the citizens assisted in the work of taking down their own buildings—there was not a murmuring word against taking down houses, or sending of stock from any person."⁴⁰

In the meantime, on August 9, Chief Sowiette came into Springville, "for the purpose of making peace." The gesture nearly caused disaster when the edgy townsmen sounded a general alarm at the Indians' approach. All in his party fled and Sowiette "nervously asked to be allowed to follow his family, though he was treated kindly. He promised 'that he would return with them and make a treaty which will be satisfactory.'⁴¹ By then it was apparent that Walker had not near the full support of the several Ute bands.

By mid-August the massive white retrenchment was in full swing. The scene all along the Wasatch was one of tearing down, forting, harvesting under guard, and herding hundreds of cattle to the safety of the Salt Lake Valley meadows. Several detachments of militia were sent out from Great Salt Lake City (and the northern communities of Utah County) to act as pickets in the harvest fields and to help herd the surplus cattle.⁴² Those Utes still in war paint, their ranks growing ever

³⁹ Kimball to Wells, August 7, 1853, SA-1350; Post Order no. 3, SA-300; Smith to Wells, August 8, 1853, SA-1351; Smith's Special Order no. 26, SA-332; and Smith to Wells, August 27, 1853, SA-357. General Wells ordered all charges dropped on August 25, 1853, with the warning, "let no one presume that it can be repeated with impunity." See Wells to Little, SA-355. On November 20, 1853, Mormon church members of Cedar City voted to excommunicate twenty men and six women who had left for California as a result of the dispute. Of the twenty men who left, seven had been previously court-martialed for breaches of discipline during the war. See JH, November 20, 1853; and SA-327, SA-332, and SA-416.

⁴⁰ Smith to Wells, August 27, 1853, SA-357; Kimball to Wells, August 4, 1853, SA-1350; SA-1347; and August 7, 1853, SA-1350; and HBY, August 4, 1853. The dismantling of Paragonah was a major task as it was a small town containing seventeen families. Smith reported "8 adobe houses [out of 31] and 10 log houses [out of 43], 1 tannery, and 1 machine shop torn down. Here is 211 acres of land fenced and improved, the buildings destroyed in moving this post was worth \$4,320.00." See Smith to Wells, August 27, 1853, SA-357.

⁴¹ SA-329.

⁴² Special Order no. 3, SA-263; Smith to Wells, July 27, 1853, SA-295; July 28–August 13, 1853, SA-1343; Bradley to Wells, August 1, 1853, SA-1344; Kimball to Wells, July 27, 1853, SA-296; Higgins to Ferguson, no date, SA-319; Higgins to Wells, August 3, 1853, SA-321;

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thinner, were by then capable only of guerrilla-type raids on targets of opportunity, their ability to effect a telling blow on any of the forts virtually beyond possibility.

The most vulnerable targets were the herding and harvesting parties and, later, parties tasked with hauling newly harvested grain from the fields and between settlements. On August 11 a detachment driving surplus cattle was attacked at Clover Creek. The militia escort reported that they may have killed as many as five Utes in the return fire. One militiaman was wounded.⁴³ Four days later, however, the war took a decidedly vicious turn when four men were caught in an ambush in the vicinity of Parley's Park (Park City) while hauling lumber. Two of them, John Dixon and John Quayle, were killed, and the other two, one of them wounded, barely escaped on horseback. Apparently they had gone to Parley's Park without militia escort, thinking themselves safe because they were in friendly Shoshoni country, far from the center of trouble. A forty-seven-man militia detachment was sent out from Great Salt Lake City with orders to "route the Indians secreted in the various Kanyons." The commander was, however, "authorized to treat with them and endeavor to carry out his orders without the shedding of blood."⁴⁴ The conciliatory policy still held, although clamps were further tightened three days later when Governor Young issued another proclamation revoking all previously issued licenses to trade with the Utes and strictly forbidding any sort of trade with them unless otherwise permitted by the superintendent of Indian affairs or one of his agents.⁴⁵

Colonel Smith, having completed his work in the south, departed Parowan on August 17 and traveled quickly north, reaching Provo in four days. En route he met with several small bands of Utes, all desiring peace. They reported that Walker had gone to the Colorado River to trade with Mexicans and that the war was being continued by another chief by the name of Wyonah, a brother of the Indian killed by James Ivie on July 17.⁴⁶

Higgins and Isaac Morely to Wells, August 7, 1853, SA-325; Higgins to Ferguson, August 7, 1853, SA-326; and Heywood to Young, August 20, 1853, SA-1355. A massive effort to wall in Salt Lake City was begun in late August 1853, perhaps as an example to the outlying settlements. Although the project was not completed, about six miles of walling was constructed. See HBY, August 1853.

⁴³ Bradley to Wells, August 11, 1853, SA-334.

⁴⁴ Special Order no. 13, August 16, 1853, SA-230; and Whitney, *History of Utah*, 1:517.

⁴⁵ JH, August 19, 1853.

⁴⁶ Smith to Wells, August 27, 1853, SA-357.

Smith was not happy with the conditions at Provo. Apparently due to a combination of complacency and intransigence on the part of settlers there, and inattention to duty on the part of Colonel Conover, little had been done to comply with either General Order no. 2 or the well-defined special orders Smith had addressed personally to Conover. Smith angrily departed the next day for Great Salt Lake City to report his trip to the governor and to request that action be taken against Conover. Three days later Colonel Conover was relieved of his command and placed under arrest, charged with "neglect of duty in noncompliance with General and Special Orders."⁴⁷ As at Cedar City, Smith responded to the challenge to authority with resolution and force. (Governor Young dropped all charges against Conover a month later and restored him to command.)⁴⁸

IV

Discipline cracked under the strain in September, probably due to a number of factors including weeks of tension, summer heat, fatigue, and the willingness of some to shed more blood. The result was a spate of ugly killings on both sides that nearly destroyed the entire defense and conciliation effort.

The first week was quiet. In fact there were indications that peace was near at hand. White Eye, principal chief of the Utes, and Antero, chief of the Yampa Utes, visited Governor Young on September 10 and professed their desire for peace.⁴⁹ That visit, combined with knowledge that Chief Walker had left, persuaded territorial officials that only a few hostiles representing bands from the Utah and Sanpete valleys remained in the fight. Hope of a quick peace was dashed, however, when a party of Pahvant Utes, thought to have been friendly, killed a militiaman standing guard at Fillmore Fort early in the morning of September 13.⁵⁰

That same day at Manti, a group of Utes came into the fort and professed friendship. Suspicious of their identity, Major Higgins surreptitiously sent out a patrol to inspect the Indians' camp. The patrol returned reporting that recently stolen goods were found in the camp, and the Indians at the fort were confronted with that fact. What occurred next is unclear except that the ensuing argument led to slaughter. Higgins

⁴⁷ Smith to Wells, August 25, 1853, SA-356; and Wells to Conover, August 25, 1853, SA-353.

⁴⁸ Special Order, September 12, 1853, SA-383.

⁴⁹ JH, September 10-12, 1853.

⁵⁰ Standage to Smith, September 13, 1853, SA-384.

later reported that "one of them turned to Isaac Morley . . . for fight, where upon two of the guard immediately shot him down. [A]t the same time the other four made a break to escape when the remainder of the guard fired upon them and brought them to the ground."⁵¹

Regardless of the evidence of theft found, it is clear that the most critical element of the general orders had been violated. It was well known that both the Shoshonis and Utes traditionally sought revenge for any death they perceived as unprovoked. This knowledge was intrinsic in the decision to carry out a policy of conciliation in the first place. In this case, the shooting down of Indians inside the fort while on a mission of peace, whether sincere or not, demanded revenge. Retaliation was probably assured when during the next several days three Ute women who had accompanied those slain to the fort either escaped or were allowed to leave—and to tell their story.

A potentially crucial note of foreboding was sounded on September 22 when a report circulated that Arrapine said he had "killed a squaw and two horses in consequence of the war, and that he never would make peace but wanted to fight."⁵² Unfortunately the import of that was lost—either disbelieved or dismissed as nothing more than savage bravado. Concern over the possibility that Arrapine, as the second-ranking Ute war chief, had sworn a vendetta might have restrained further aggressive action on the part of the militia, thereby dramatically reducing the excesses soon to come.

On September 25 Major Markham, again in direct violation of the general orders, sent out a punitive force from Palmyra to make contact with a nearby band of hostile Utes. The force, under Capt. Charles Hancock, came upon and surrounded the Ute camp in the vicinity of the Goshen marshes south of Utah Lake. The militia assaulted the camp and killed an estimated four or five and perhaps several more. Survivors escaped by hiding in the marshes until the attacking militia left.⁵³

Retaliation was vicious. On October 1 William Reed, James Nelson, William Luke, and Thomas Clark, serving as teamsters taking a load of grain to Salt Lake City from Manti, missed connections with their assigned militia escort and went on alone to Uintah Springs (Fountain Green) where they made camp. Sometime during the night Utes crept up to the unguarded camp and brutally slaughtered the men, probably

⁵¹ Higgins to Ferguson, September 29, 1853, SA-1371.

⁵² Joseph L. Heywood to Young, September 22, 1853, SA-397.

⁵³ Markham to Wells, October 5, 1853, SA-395; SA-397.

in their beds. The horribly mutilated bodies were found by a detachment from Manti and brought into Nephi Fort the next day.⁵⁴ The sight sickened and enraged those in charge at Nephi.

Shortly thereafter eight friendly Ute Indians camped nearby were brought into the fort "to have a talk." According to Major Bradley:

I told the Indians to lay down their arms but they refused and showed fight. I ordered their arms taken whereupon two shot arrows and wounded one white in the arm and one arrow went through the coat of another upon which I ordered them to be fired upon. Seven Indians were killed and the Squaw was taken prisoner. About an hour later one other Indian and a boy came up[. T]he Indian was shot and the boy taken prisoner. . . .

This evening at 8 o'clock the Guard discovered an Indian and fired upon him and suppose they killed him.⁵⁵

The above report formed the basis of the formal record. In Brigham Young's manuscript history can be found only the brief account that "in a skirmish at Nephi, Juab Valley, eight Indians were killed and one squaw and two boys taken prisoners."⁵⁶ However, two other eyewitnesses left records telling a far different story. Martha Spence Heywood wrote in her journal that the murder at Uintah Springs "actuated our brethren, counselled by Father Morley of San Pete . . . and President Call of Fillmore, to do quite as barbarous an act the following morning, being the Sabbath. Nine Indians coming into our camp looking for protection and bread with us . . . were shot down without one minute's notice."⁵⁷ Her account is backed up by that of Adelia Almira Wilcox, who wrote in her memoirs that the Indians were "shot down without even considering whether they were the guilty ones or not. . . . They were shot down like so many dogs, picked up with pitchforks [put] on a sleigh and hauled away."⁵⁸ Adelia might have had reason to be less denunciatory: William Hatton, killed by Indians just two weeks before, was her husband.

On October 4 John E. Warner and William Mills, working alone at the grist mill just outside Manti, were ambushed, killed, and mutilated as the grisly cycle of mutual retaliation continued to grind.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ These were the first mutilations to occur. The two men killed at Parley's Park on August 15 were found two days later; their bodies had not been mutilated. It is interesting to note that mutilation did not occur until after Indians had been murdered in Manti Fort on September 13.

⁵⁵ Bradley to Wells, October 2, 1853, SA-396.

⁵⁶ HBY, October 1, 1853.

⁵⁷ Juanita Brooks ed., *Not By Bread Alone: The Journal of Martha Spence Heywood 1850-56* (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1978), p. 97.

⁵⁸ Adelia Almira Wilcox Memoirs, October 2, 1853, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City.

⁵⁹ Higgins to Wells, October 4, 1853, SA-399.

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The situation apparently out of control, General Wells ordered out another large force from Great Salt Lake City to "search for and if possible break up and discourage the several bands of hostile Indians." Once again, however, the olive branch was held out. In an almost plaintive tone, commanders selected to lead the expedition were admonished that they "in all their encounters with the Indians . . . will avail themselves of every opportunity wherein the Indians show of friendship or sue for peace, to treat and endeavor by every means in their power to bring about friendly relations between them and the whites."⁶⁰

More blood was to be let. On October 14 Firney L. Tindrell, spading up potatoes near the abandoned Summit Creek settlement, was caught unprotected and killed. His body also was mutilated.⁶¹ No doubt disgusted with the continued violence, and convinced that killing more Indians would only trigger more retaliation, Governor Young wrote the militia commanders most responsible on October 16, pleading for compliance with his orders.

Brethren we must have peace. We must cease our hostilities and seek by every possible means to reach the Indians with a peaceful message.⁶²

Then another senseless killing of an Indian sent a shock through the territory. The retaliation in this instance gained national attention. On the night of October 26 a vengeful war party of Pahvant Utes crept up on a team of U.S. Army topographic engineers near Fillmore and brutally slaughtered seven of them as they were arising for breakfast, and the now well-known Gunnison Massacre was history. The massacre was carried out as revenge for the murder of an old and respected Pahvant Indian by members of a passing wagon train on October 1.⁶³ Though the incident had no direct relationship with the Walker War, the general atmosphere of hostility and tension no doubt had an influence.

Then the killing stopped. Whether because of the threat of more militia coming from Salt Lake City, or fear of U.S. Army intervention as a result of the Gunnison Massacre, or because sufficient revenge had been meted out, the Utes once again pulled back. Governor Young continued attempts to treat with the Utes while at the same time working to

⁶⁰ Special Order no. 21, October 5, 1853, SA-398.

⁶¹ Markham to unknown, October 15, 1853, SA-401.

⁶² Young to Conover, Markham, and Bradley, HBY, October 16, 1853.

⁶³ There are numerous accounts of the Gunnison Massacre. See JH, October 26 and December 6, 1853, for early reports of the tragedy. Also see Roberts, *Comprehensive History*, 4:40-46.



Dimick Huntington.
USHS collections.



Brigham Young in 1850.
USHS collections.

assure their isolation. Interpreter Dimick B. Huntington, sent out to contact any Utes who cared to talk, returned November 9 and reported having had friendly meetings with small groups at Chicken Creek, Peteetneet, Summit Creek, and Battle Creek. He also reported to everyone's relief that "Walker and his band had fought one another, and split up, and that Walker had gone to the Navajoes."⁶¹ The now seriously weakened hostile Utes, probably under Arrapine, shifted their operations north to Utah Valley and nipped at exposed points in the vicinity of Spanish Fork and Provo, burning a mill near Manti as well as several abandoned houses at Summit Creek en route.⁶² Young continued his containment strategy by sending out a mission to take control of the Green River crossings in the northeast corner of the territory and by announcing major missionary efforts among the Paiutes in the far-southern sector. At the same time Colonel Smith called up 120 families residing in Utah Valley and ordered them south to strengthen the Parowan and

⁶¹ JH, November 11, 1853.

⁶² Bradley to Ferguson, November 7, 1853, SA-423; Conover to Wells, November 14, 1853, SA-414; and JH, November 24, December 1, 1853.

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Cedar City settlements, this in response to instructions from the Mormon First Presidency in October to strengthen outlying communities throughout the territory.⁶⁶

On December 3 Governor Young took a major step toward peace by offering total amnesty to all the Utes in the recent hostilities. The letter was another masterpiece of conciliation. Opening with the statement, "I am the best friend you have got on earth," Young proffered:

Let . . . that [the killings on both sides] all pass. I . . . say . . . no Indian who has killed any of my people, nor any of my people who have killed an Indian shall be hurt by either party for such conduct.

The governor also extended aid.

If the Indians will all be quiet and friendly, I will try to induce my people to furnish them bread, clothing, and other articles for their comfort, and some powder and lead to hunt with, but I shall want the Indians to work for what they get from the whites, as we had to do, or pay in skins, and quit begging.⁶⁷

There was no immediate response; hostile acts continued for several more weeks, the last significant raids being the burning of Allred's Settlement (abandoned July 29) on January 6, 1854, and the theft of sixty to eighty cattle near Spanish Fork on February 26.⁶⁸ A more immediate response might have been expected considering the generous terms offered, particularly the food, clothing, and ammunition, on the eve of what was sure to be a lean winter for the Utes remaining "in the mountains." Still, two more Ute bands came in and expressed a desire for peace. Ammon and his band set up winter camp adjacent to the southern settlements, outside the Ute domain, and Chief Migo and his band came into Manti in early February.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ JH, November 15, 30; December 29, 1853. Also see Roberts, *Comprehensive History*, 4:54-55. The Southern Indian Mission, called in December 1853, departed for New Harmony on April 14, 1854, under Parley P. Pratt. See JH, December 26, 1853; April 14, May 19, 1854.

⁶⁷ Young to Sowiette, White Eye, Peteetneet, Arrapine, and Teesharnosheegee, December 3, 1853. BYC, reel 92, box 57, folder 1. Young's words, "I will try to induce my people to furnish bread," etc., indicates some doubt as to whether the settlers would be obedient to his instructions, or appeals, to further conciliate. On December 10, 1853, Young instructed Bradley to reward Kanosh for his prompt assistance in recovering the property of the Gunnison survey party—and as a gesture to retain his friendship. Young to Bradley, December 10, 1853, BYC, reel 92.

⁶⁸ First Presidency 11th General Epistle, April 10, 1854. Twenty-five head were soon returned at the insistence of Chief Peteetneet. Regarding the burning of Allred's Settlement, it is ironic that original settlers began to return to that ill-fated hamlet without permission in October. Major Higgins even requested authority to reestablish a militia element there. Instead of getting such authority they were summarily ordered back out in November. Resettlement was not again attempted until 1859. See Higgins to Ferguson, October 25, 1853, SA-408; and W. H. Lever, comp., *History of Sanpete and Emery Counties: Utah* (Salt Lake City: Press of the Tribune Job Printing Co., 1889), pp. 203-4, 472; and Higgins to Ferguson, January 2, 1854, SA-1381.

⁶⁹ JH, February 13, March 1, 1854.

The ice was broken on March 12 when Walker, since returned from spending the winter with the Navajos, sent an emissary to Manti requesting Isaac Morley (or some other) to come to his camp "and have a talk." Morley responded by sending out Lt. James T. S. Allred, who could speak the Ute tongue, and three others, with a wagonload of gifts. Allred presented a letter from Morley and the two had a long and friendly meeting, during which Walker explained the war as he saw it, and then presented his conditions for peace. As reported second-hand by Higgins, Walker pleaded

the cause of his people saying that we have taken his land and fishing places and now he wishes the Mormons to purchase his land and make peace. He wishes Gov. Young to send D. B. Huntington immediately to meet him at Fillmore to make a treaty with him and purchase his land. He also wishes him to send guns, ammunition, and blankets to trade him (Walker) for horses.

He promises to be at peace until he hears from Gov. Young.⁷⁰

Whether or not Young had yet received Allred's report, on March 24 he dispatched Maj. E. A. Bedell, Indian subagent, to "enquire of them [the Indians] in relation to holding a treaty for the sale of their land preparatory to such times as we may be authorized to treat with them for that purpose by the General Government."⁷¹ The continued failure by the government to authorize extinction of title by purchase weakened Young's hand considerably, yet the issue proved not to be crucial to peace as Walker himself, perhaps wary of taking such a permanent step, backed off in that regard during his meeting with Bedell on March 31. "Walker said he would prefer not to sell if he could live peacefully with the white people which he was anxious to do."⁷²

April was a testing period. Walker showed up at the southern settlements and threatened trouble if a militia party there carried out its intention of pursuing Indians who had stolen cattle. Utes also stopped travelers and demanded tribute for safe passage. On April 14 Governor Young sent another letter to Walker gently prodding him. "[If] you wish to throw me, and my people away, just say so, and let me know that this is what you wish; but if you do not wish to throw me away, and blot

⁷⁰ Higgins to Ferguson, March 16, 1854, SA-1386. This report indicates that Walker was not yet aware of the letter of amnesty sent by Governor Young to Chief Sowiette (and others) on December 3.

⁷¹ Young to Bedell, March 24, 1854, BYC, reel 84, box 1, pp. 60-61. Young dispatched a friendly letter to Walker the same day. See Young to Walker, March 24, 1854, HBY.

⁷² Bedell to Young, April 6, 1854, BYC, reel 93, box 58, folder 3.

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your name off from my books, you must be friends with me and my people." He went on to state that he would soon begin a trip south and that he expected to meet Walker "somewhere on the route; when we will have a friendly talk as usual."⁷³ The letter was delivered by another interpreter (George Bean), more talks were held, and Bean copied down a letter from Walker to Young in which Walker again presented peace terms, this time in considerable detail. No reservations whatever were to be placed on trade; Young "must bring 2 oxen and some flour [,] some good guns and ammunition and a little whiskey"; cattle and horses, the number to be negotiated, were to be given annually for twenty years for "portions of his lands"; and "many presents—much more than is common" were to be provided. Walker added that he had "sent Ammon to the pides [Paiutes] to get some children which if we do not buy he will sell to the Mexicans." No fool as a negotiator, Walker had demanded a virtual status quo antebellum.⁷⁴

Governor Young departed for his southern tour with a large entourage that included seven members of the Quorum of the Twelve and several women and children.⁷⁵ At Provo he ordered that four fat beeves be sent ahead to Walker.⁷⁶ Walker's party left Fillmore and headed north, visiting Nephi before dropping back to a camp at Chicken Creek. At Nephi they were warmly received; they even "partook of an entertainment got up for them and appeared to have a very good spirit indeed."⁷⁷

Final arrangements were made for a meeting at Chicken Creek, letters being sent from Provo to Walker and Arrapine to that effect, with explanatory letters and tobacco also being sent to the principal Paiute chiefs as a token to demonstrate that the Paiutes would not be forsaken in the treaty to be worked out.⁷⁸

Governor Young's party arrived at Chicken Creek at noon on May 11, 1854, and extended opening courtesies. Walker, however, refused to leave his tent. Negotiations proceeded only after Young entered Walk-

⁷³ Young to Walkara, April 14, 1854, HBY. Young sent a friendly letter with a shirt and some tobacco to Chief Petetneet on April 8. HBY, April 6, 1854.

⁷⁴ George W. Bean to Young (for Walker), May 1, 1854, HBY.

⁷⁵ JH, May 4, 1854. The party included Parley P. Pratt, Heber C. Kimball, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Ezra T. Benson, Lorenzo Snow, Erastas Snow, Thomas E. Bullock (82 men total), fourteen women (wives of several of the men), five children, ninety-five animals, and thirty-four carriages.

⁷⁶ JH, May 7, 1854.

⁷⁷ Brooks, *Not By Bread Alone*, p. 100.

⁷⁸ Wall to Young, May 1, 1854, SA-437; Young to Walkara, May 7, 1854, HBY; to Grosepene, May 7, 1854, *ibid.*, and to Tutseperts and Tochints, May 9, 1854, *ibid.*, and also Young to Arrapine, May 7, 1854, BYC, reel 92, box 57, folder 1.

er's tent where he and George A. Smith laid their hands upon the head of Walker's daughter, who was ill, and gave her a blessing—another conciliatory gesture in response to Walker's gesture of pride.⁷⁹

A full account of the negotiations has not survived, only vignettes describing long and emotional speeches and spirited bargaining in the exchange of stolen horses for gifts. Governor Young, apparently willing to pursue the course of conciliation to a point just short of capitulation, purchased an Indian slave from Walker for a gun and two blankets.⁸⁰

Obviously the question of slavery was not settled, nor was that of the purchase of Indian lands—the two major issues at hand. Yet somehow a meeting of minds was reached that at least allowed cessation of hostilities. Walker knew that he was beaten, and he probably understood that Young's commitments to the Paiutes would not be compromised. On the other hand, Young knew he had neither the means nor the authority to buy the Ute lands. The peace was therefore won in large measure by the long and patient application of conciliation, culminated by a gesture on the part of the victor that, though appearing to be a reversal of policy and principle, allowed his adversary to accept defeat without humiliation. Negotiations over, gifts presented, and a large feast in celebration of the peace completed, Governor Young's party departed on the road south. Walker accepted Young's invitation to ride along for at least part of the way, and the war was over.⁸¹

V

In nearly every instance of Indian revolt on the American frontier, the Indians were checked either by extermination or removal. It seems that conciliation, though often proposed, was invariably engulfed in the relentless flood of white expansion and greed. The experience in Utah had been little different before 1853. Extermination of hostile Utes in Utah Valley was attempted, though unsuccessfully, in 1850. Removal was also attempted, again unsuccessfully, as repeated requests to that end were ignored by the federal government. Conciliation had also been extended, although haphazardly.⁸² What made the Walker War experi-

⁷⁹ JH, May 11–12, December 3, 1854.

⁸⁰ JH, May 11–12, 1854.

⁸¹ Ibid., and Young to John M. Bernhisel, May 31, 1854, BYC, reel 32, box 13, folder 12.

⁸² That a campaign of selective extermination was launched in 1850 (by the militia of the State of Deseret) is not commonly known. Primary documentation indicating such a campaign is found in BYC, microfilm reel 80, box 47, folder 6; and SA-5, SA-1309, SA-1311, SA-1312. For an in-depth discussion of that episode, and other militia actions under similar instructions as late as March 1852, see Howard A. Christy, "Open Hand and Mailed Fist: Mormon-Indian Relations in Utah, 1847–52," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 46 (Summer 1978): 216–35.

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ence different was a determination to carry out conciliation, founded upon a strong defense, to a successful end at almost any cost.

Surely the strategy adhered to in the Walker War was unprecedented as far as the Mormons were concerned. That such a strategy was carried out to a successful conclusion may also have been unique in the general western experience. Could that effort have served as a model for restraining bloodshed between the Indians and whites on the western frontier after 1853? Probably not.

The Walker War defense and conciliation strategy was tested under conditions that seem from hindsight to have offered every chance for success. The Ute Indians were greatly outmatched in numbers, firepower, and military savvy from the outset. They would have been defeated soundly no matter what strategy was used against them. The highly cohesive settlement pattern effected by the Mormons greatly simplified problems of defense and control in the face of a hostile threat, especially considering the additional fact that the Mormons had established a strong tradition of excellent local leadership, civil and ecclesiastical as well as military. And perhaps most significant, the Utah territorial government was highly organized and powerful. At the helm of that government

*Indian War veterans reunion.
George E. Anderson photo,
courtesy Rell G. Francis,
Heritage Prints.*



Governor Young, architect of the defense and conciliation strategy, capitalized on a combination of formidable personal ability and drive, a charisma ideal for a leader on the rough and dangerous frontier, and a near-dictatorial control over the majority of the people by virtue of his position as the prophet and president of the Mormon church.

Yet the strategy nearly failed—not due to the actions of the Indians—but because it was so difficult to enforce. Governor Young met strong and persistent opposition on the part of many Mormon settlers and militia leaders. Policies supporting the strategy had to be figuratively forced down their throats; and the emotional costs of that were high. Defiance of explicit orders led to numerous courts-martial, reliefs of command, much hard feeling, and, in the case of the community at Cedar City, mutiny and the subsequent emigration out of Utah (and eventual excommunication) of several families. Offensive operations by militia units, in utter disregard of orders to the contrary, led to most of the deaths suffered by both sides, probably accompanied by feelings of guilt and outrage. Abandonment, dismantling, or destruction of entire communities and numerous outlying farms also brought hardship and no little bitterness to many families, some having just completed the exhausting emigration out of Europe and across the American plains. Frequent admonishment and threats from ecclesiastical leaders must have sorely tried the faith of those who could not, or would not, understand the necessity of the stringent measures taken in order to quell, or mollify, a perceived mere handful of Indians.

The strategy therefore required unparalleled tenacity on the part of the leadership and enormous effort and sacrifice on the part of the people, even against a limited threat—requirements well beyond the capability of most communities on the cutting edge of the frontier. Successful as the Walker War experiment was by comparison, it still seems to prove the thesis forwarded by a number of historians who have asserted that, given the nature of the westward expansion movement in the nineteenth century, and the deeply ingrained antipathy toward the Indians held by the overwhelming majority of whites on the frontier, the demise of the Indian people through bloodshed and removal was inevitable.

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